

LYNCHBURG CITY COUNCIL

Agenda Item Summary

MEETING DATE: **August 13, 2002, Work Session**

AGENDA ITEM NO.: **4**

CONSENT:

REGULAR:

CLOSED SESSION:

(Confidential)

ACTION:

INFORMATION:

ITEM TITLE: **Virginia's First Cities Communication Plan**

RECOMMENDATION: Endorse and support the local implementation of the Communication Plan adopted by the Virginia First Cities Coalition.

SUMMARY: As a member of the Virginia First Cities Coalition, Lynchburg has played an active role in that organization as it pursues legislative and policy changes and attempts to educate the public with a goal of bettering the condition of the Commonwealth's core cities. In March 2002, City Council endorsed the Coalition's work plan. Included in the work plan was the development of a comprehensive public relations and information plan. The Coalition requested the public information officers from the member localities to work together to create a communication plan with the overall goal being to spur the public to take action regarding First Cities issues. The Coalition has requested that each member city endorse the plan and implement it at a local level. A copy of the Plan is attached.

PRIOR ACTION(S): Virginia's First Cities Work Plan adopted March 12, 2002

FISCAL IMPACT: N/A

CONTACT(S): JoAnn Martin - 847-1849

ATTACHMENT(S): Virginia's First Cities Communication Plan

REVIEWED BY: lkp

First Cities Coalition Communication Plan

Draft: June 11, 2002

Preliminary Research

Legislative analysts and PIO's provide the following informal research findings regarding the public's perceptions of First Cities' issues:

- General public is, for the most part, unaware of inequities in the State tax structure and its impact on cities.
- Many of the print media support tax structure reform.
- Community leaders appear to read op-ed articles; but the public at large has expressed little interest in the issue.
- The general public is unlikely to become involved in this issue until they actually feel the pain of curtailed services.
- Some legislators have indicated a desire to help – but they are receiving little or no encouragement from the public.

Goals

- Spur the public to take action regarding First Cities' issues – primarily by contacting their legislators and communicating with fellow citizens. To do this, we must:
 - Increase public awareness of First Cities' issues
 - Tailor the messages to address the needs of each identified public
 - Create an emotional response among the public regarding First Cities' issues
 - Communicate in easy-to-understand ways
 - Humanize the issues so that they are not perceived as “boring” or “bureaucratic”
 - Specify the actions we would like the public to take
 - Sustain synergy among our First Cities by each carrying the same message
 - Within this framework, modify messages within each city to address their particular needs

- Assure that this is a sustained communications effort – not a one-time endeavor

Objectives

- Legislators will become aware that the public is contacting them on a continued basis, and in significant numbers, regarding First Cities' issues (based on feedback from legislative analysts)
- Legislators will become aware of the public's passionate demand that the tax structure be fixed
- Legislators will initiate specific actions to rectify the inequities in the State tax structure

Key Messages

- First Cities are fiscally stressed due to inequities in the State tax structure
- These inequities have a direct bearing on the quality of life for citizens
- If not addressed, the situation will become significantly worse in the years to come
- It's already happening today. Here are some examples in your community. (List them)
- Solutions:
 - The size of the revenue pie needs to grow
 - The distribution process needs to be fixed
 - There needs to be equitable funding for education and transportation
 - The State needs to take more responsibility for human services
- You can help by carrying this message to your legislators
- You can help by telling your friends and acquaintances to do the same
- You can help by taking action now

Target Audiences

- The media
- City employees
- Local opinion makers
- Civic and community groups
- The business community
- Business leaders and cultural leaders
- The elderly
- "Generation Xers" (includes parents of schoolchildren)

Role of Cities' PIO's

Local Media Relations

Communication With City Employees

Communication With Local Opinion Makers

Communication With Local Civic and Community Groups

Communication With Local Business Community

Communication With Local Elderly Community

Communication With Local Generation Xers (including parents of school children)

Development of Local Web Site Content

Development of First Cities' Web Site Content

Development of First Cities' Brochure Content

Role of Web Site Consultant

Provide web site technical consultation

Role of Design Consultant

Design of First Cities' brochure

Role of Agency

Newsletter development and distribution

Develop advertising strategy

Oversee advertising media buys

Regional media relations (business audiences, seniors, education, etc.)

Communications Tools

- First Cities' Brochure
- Briefing Paper
- First Cities' Web site
- City Intranets
- Meetings With Key Individuals
- Meetings With Key Groups
- City Employee Newsletters
- First Cities' Newsletter
- E-mail "One-minute Facts"
- Print Advertising
- Radio Advertising

Estimated Costs FY03

Advertising/PR Agency Fee	\$ 50,000
Print and electronic media buys (placeholder figure)	\$ 35,000
Room rentals, food and beverages for public forums	\$ 30,000
First Cities' Brochure printing (first run)	\$ 20,000
Quarterly newsletter (2 color, 2 pages); 2 in FY03; printing	\$ 10,000
E-mail software *	\$ 8,000
Web Site Development (technical assistance)	\$ 5,000
First Cities' Brochure (1 color) design	\$ 3,000
Quarterly newsletter mailing (5K subscribers, twice)	\$ 3,000
Work Place Posters (3,000)	<u>\$ 3,000</u>
TOTAL	\$167,000

* No cost initially; if subscriber volumes grow significantly, special software recommended.
Server would need to be provided by a host city

THE MEDIA

Profile of this audience

The media typically will side with being a guardian of “public” good.

Complex stories about funding formulas, etc. should be used sparingly.

The messages need to be general in nature with a view toward the human need that is not being met under the current systems.

Local human-interest stories can emotionally charge a policy discussion.

Communications Tools

- Presentation in all First Cities to print and electronic media editors
 - ✓ Participants to include key staff and elected officials
 - ✓ Hand-outs to include easy-to-understand talking points; charts and graphs
- Provide print and electronic media with stories about the human need that is not being met under the current systems
- Provide a steady stream of “one-minute facts” about why the present tax structure does not work. Send to local media on a continual basis
- Enlist community leaders to write letters to the editor and op-ed articles
- Host interviews with city leaders on city-government TV stations
- Place overarching stories to trade and professional publications

CITY EMPLOYEES

Profile of this audience

City employees typically have a good service ethic and are looking for ways to do their jobs better. This could be one area of appeal to them – i.e., with more funds, we would have greater resources to do our jobs.

Because they have a direct vested interest, the messages to employees could also be more complex and detailed.

Besides the talking points noted earlier, here are additional points that will be made to employees:

- To prosper, cities need a bigger slice of the state revenue pie -- and as a city employee, you'll benefit by urging your elected officials to modernize the state's funding policies for cities.
- With more equitable state funding you'll have additional work-related resources, enabling you to do your job even better.
- (Our city's name) can become an even better place to work, live and raise a family -- with improved funding for our schools, our roads and for health and human services.
- Our city can build on its revitalization plans and attract more business and tourism, leading to more jobs and revenues to help our city prosper.

Communications Tools

- Messages on the city's Intranet
 - ✓ Facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Message from City Manager
 - ✓ Names and addresses of legislators
 - ✓ Hyperlink to First Cities' web site
- Periodic e-mails
 - ✓ "One-minute" facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Hyperlink to Intranet site
- Employee newsletter articles
 - ✓ Facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Testimonials from employees who have taken action
- Messages for employee pay stubs

- Workplace posters (elevators, cafés, bathrooms)
- Talking points for employee forums
- Q&A in city officials' "issue book"

LOCAL OPINION MAKERS

Profile of this audience

This audience includes

- Civic and community leaders
- Clergy
- Political activists

They may have a direct connection to individual legislators and/or are able to bring many people to the table.

These people will respond to a personal approach where they have a vested interest.

Communications Tools

- One-on-one meetings; direct contact by city leaders
 - ✓ Facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Seek their input
 - ✓ Ask them to contact legislators and spread the word
 - ✓ Provide them with briefing paper
 - ✓ Provide them with ample First Cities' brochures
 - ✓ Ask for their e-mail address
- Follow-up e-mails on an ongoing basis
 - ✓ "One-minute" facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Hyperlink to First Cities' web site

CIVIC AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Profile of this audience

Civic leagues and other targeted groups share an interest in changing things in their community.

- They pride themselves on “being in the know”
- They will share information with a fairly broad audience
- They need fairly detailed written information that can be used in newsletters, handed out, etc.

Communications Tools

- Individual Power Point presentations to groups
 - ✓ Facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Seek their input
 - ✓ Ask them to contact legislators and spread the word
 - ✓ Provide each organization with briefing paper
 - ✓ Provide individuals with ample First Cities’ brochures
 - ✓ Ask for their e-mail address
- Follow-up e-mail messages on an ongoing basis
 - ✓ “One-minute” facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Hyperlink to First Cities’ web site

THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Profile of this audience

This audience includes

- Major local businesses and their employees
- Smaller local businesses and their employees
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local business organizations
- Regional business organizations
- Regional economic development associations
- Other firms that do business with our cities

Businesses become active in public affairs primarily to promote or protect a healthy business environment and their own industry interests.

Their motivations may include economic advantages, greater or more efficient infrastructure, or other conditions favoring their operations.

Business employees feel an obvious interest in supporting activities that enhance the health of their organization and help keep their jobs secure.

Communications Tools:

- Identify potentially involved local businesses via
 - ✓ Business licenses
 - ✓ Economic Development Dept. data bases
- Identify regional business associations, including
 - ✓ Virginia Association of Community Banks
 - ✓ Virginia Healthcare and Hospital Association
 - ✓ Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association
 - ✓ Parking Association of the Virginias
 - ✓ Virginia Retail Merchants Association
 - ✓ Commonwealth Transportation Alliance
- Identify regional economic development associations, including
 - ✓ Virginia Economic Developers Association
 - ✓ Virginia Association of Realtors
 - ✓ Coalition for Virginia's Future
 - ✓ Virginia Economic Development Partnership

- Establish one-on-one meetings with the leaders of large corporations within each city
 - ✓ Facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Share points of view and materials established by business coalitions in support of First Cities' issues
 - ✓ Seek their input
 - ✓ Ask them to contact legislators and spread the word
 - ✓ Provide them with briefing paper
 - ✓ Provide them with ample First Cities' brochures
 - ✓ Ask them for permission to work with their PIO's to reach their employees
 - ✓ Ask for their e-mail address
 - ✓ Follow-up with periodic e-mail messages and hyperlink to First Cities' web site
 - ✓ Follow-up with periodic personal phone call from city manager thanking them for their continued support
- Communicate with employees of large corporations via their PIO's
 - ✓ Articles for newsletters
 - ✓ Bullet points for supervisors to use at staff meetings
 - ✓ First Cities' brochure for all employees
 - ✓ Workplace posters
- Establish forums for smaller businesses
 - ✓ Facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Seek their input
 - ✓ Ask them to contact legislators and spread the word
 - ✓ Provide them with briefing paper
 - ✓ Provide them with ample First Cities' brochures
 - ✓ Ask for their e-mail address
 - ✓ Follow-up with periodic e-mail messages and hyperlink to First Cities' web site
- Presentations to local business associations/Chambers of Commerce
 - ✓ Facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Seek their input
 - ✓ Ask them to contact legislators and spread the word
 - ✓ Provide them with briefing paper
 - ✓ Provide them with ample First Cities' brochures
 - ✓ Ask for members' e-mail address
 - ✓ Follow-up with periodic e-mail messages and hyperlink to First Cities' web site
- Letter from city manager to the CEO of firms doing business with the city
 - ✓ Facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Ask them to contact legislators and spread the word
 - ✓ Provide them with First Cities' brochure
 - ✓ Direct them to First Cities' web site, where they can provide their e-mail address
 - ✓ Follow-up with periodic e-mail messages
- Establish strategy to work with regional business and economic development associations
(This will be an agency task)

- Establish bi-annual awards for local business leaders who have supported First Cities' effort. This creates an opportunity for a forum to bring them all together for periodic updates on First Cities' issues. (This will be established once the communications program is well underway)

THE ELDERLY

Profile of this audience

Informal research indicates that this audience is generally less prone to the concepts of “change”

This audience often has strong feelings regarding potential impacts to their personal budget or finances, particularly where government is concerned – as witnessed by the strong effort to protect Social Security and not change its parameters.

This audience often has strong feelings about family, grandchildren, etc.

Messages

Besides the messages noted earlier, additional messages for this group would include:

- Lack of State funding at the local level causes additional hardship to working families and their children – that is, your children and your grandchildren
- Lack of State funding at the local level means higher local taxes to pay for services
- Lack of State funding makes it more difficult to meet public safety needs

Communications tools

- Presentations to groups where senior citizens congregate (retirement communities, senior recreation and activity centers, local meetings of senior organizations such as the AARP, etc.):
 - ✓ Facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Seek their input
 - ✓ Ask them to contact legislators and spread the word
 - ✓ Provide them with ample First Cities’ brochures
 - ✓ Ask for their e-mail address
 - ✓ Follow-up with periodic e-mail messages and hyperlink to First Cities’ web site
- Provide articles outlining the potential impact of First Cities’ issues to senior citizens in
 - ✓ Local publications for retirement communities
 - ✓ Local publications for senior centers
 - ✓ Regional retirement community newsletters.
- Provide leave-behind First Cities’ brochures for the lobbies of retirement communities

GENERATION XERS

(Including parents of school-age children)

Profile of this audience

There has been much debate over the exact definition of Generation Xers, but for the purpose of this plan it will be defined as:

- Born between 1965 and 1977
- Tremendous difference in their attitudes and behaviors
- Strong use of technology in their everyday lives
 - ✓ A very large portion of this age group has at least one computer in their home
 - ✓ More apt to “surf the web”

The younger Generation Xers generally are

- Just getting comfortable with their first job after college
- Are either newlyweds
- Or will be in the short-term future
- With respect to government, they have been described as “apathetic” and “cynical”
- While the “twenty-somethings” may be apathetic, they faithfully listen to the radio
- Although they are also known as the “Me” generation, they could be motivated to take up a cause that would clearly benefit them

By and large, those in the middle and upper range of this generation

- Are homeowners
- Are raising preschool and elementary school age children
- Are getting entrenched in their careers
- Are extremely busy, balancing career and family
- While still not extremely active in government as a whole, are more open to empathize with the issues facing elected officials
- An increasing number of the mothers in this age range are choosing to stay home with their children instead of working outside the home
- “Thirty-somethings” tend to read the paper more than the younger Generation Xers
- This group wants to get information quickly and move on

Communications Tools

- Presentations at PTA community nights
 - ✓ Facts about why the present tax structure does not work
 - ✓ Seek their input
 - ✓ Ask them to contact legislators and spread the word
 - ✓ Provide them with ample First Cities’ brochures
 - ✓ Ask for their e-mail address
 - ✓ Follow-up with periodic e-mail messages and hyperlink to First Cities’ web site
- Booths at PTA community nights

- School-age children to carry First Cities' brochures home to their parents
- A well designed, informative web site
- Local officials to participate in television interview shows
- Advertising:
 - Brief, to the point, regular radio spots on radio stations whose listeners fit the demographics
 - Advertisements in local newspapers (including non-daily papers)
 - Repetition is the key
 - Smaller, more frequent advertisements are more effective than one full-page ad
 - Television commercials with an emotional message